

Message Text

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TO AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMCONSUL LENINGRAD

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 225031

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, CGEN, CVIS, UR, US

SUBJECT: SAN FRANCISCO STAFFING LEVEL DISPUTE

REF: A) MOSCOW 12496, B) LENINGRAD 589, C) MOSCOW 6256

1. THIS CABLE OUTLINES FOR POSTS' CONSIDERATION AND COMMENT SOME AVAILABLE OPTIONS FOR RESPONDING TO SOVIET ACTIONS IN SAN FRANCISCO STAFFING LEVEL DISPUTE.

2. IN RETALIATION FOR DEPARTMENT'S POSITION ON SF STAFFING LIMIT, SOVIETS RECENTLY WITHHELD ISSUANCE OF VISA TO CONFIDENTIAL

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TDY OFFICER TO LENINGRAD (AYER), AND HAVE INDICATED THEY WILL HOLD THREE CURRENT LENINGRAD TDY APPLICATIONS FOR THREE WEEKS BEFORE ISSUING. REVIEW OF RECENT ISSUANCE FOR RESPECTIVE CONGENS DISCLOSES THAT USG SENDS CONSIDERABLY

MORE TDYS FROM OUTSIDE USSR TO LENINGRAD THAN SOVIETS SEND TO SF FROM OUTSIDE US. WE CAN FIND RECORD OF ONLY TWO SOVIET VISA APPLICATIONS FOR TDY TO SF IN 1975 TO DATE; USG OBTAINED OVER 30 TDY VISAS TO LENINGRAD IN SIX-MONTH PERIOD MARCH THROUGH AUGUST. WHILE EXACT FIGURES ARE NOT IMMEDIATELY AVAILABLE, SOVEMBASSY TRAVEL TO SF IS LESS THAN TRAVEL TO LENINGRAD OF AMEMBASSY PERSONNEL.

3. IF SOVIETS CONTINUE TO IMPOSE THREE-WEEK WAITING PERIOD ON LENINGRAD TDY VISA APPLICATIONS, USG WILL SUFFER INCONVENIENCE IN IMPORTANT PROGRAMS. SOVIET WITHHOLDING OF VISAS FOR LENINGRAD TDYS WOULD SERIOUSLY DISRUPT USG PROGRAMS.

4. CONGEN LENINGRAD IS REQUESTED TO RECONFIRM OR UPDATE REF B REPORT OF PRESENT STAFFING LEVEL AS OF OCT. 1. DEPARTMENT IS RECONFIRMING COUNT OF PRESENT SF STAFFING. SUBJECT TO VERIFICATION OF RESPECTIVE SF AND LENINGRAD COUNTS, WE SUGGEST THAT POSSIBLE US RESPONSES IN EFFORT TO CURTAIL SOVIET INTERFERENCE WITH TDY TRAVEL TO LENINGRAD AND OTHER SOVIET PRESSURE ON SF STAFFING LEVEL ISSUE INCLUDE FOLLOWING:

A. INFORM MFA THAT WITH RECENT DEPARTURE OF VICE CONSUL KULESHOV FROM SF, SOVIETS REMAIN TWO POSITIONS OVER 1 TO 1.5 RATIO AND MUST REMOVE TWO ADDITIONAL OFFICERS FROM SF; DEPARTMENT WOULD BE WILLING TO CONTINUE FLEXIBLE APPROACH AND PERMIT SOVIETS TO GO BACK TO RECENT LEVEL OF TARGET RATIO PLUS THREE, THUS ENABLING THEM TO KEEP PRESENT PERSONNEL AND REPLACE KULESHOV, BUT ONLY IF MFA WILL STOP INTERFERING WITH TDY TRAVEL TO LENINGRAD. OTHERWISE, SOVIETS WILL HAVE TO REMAIN AT STRICT 1 TO 1.5 AND WITHDRAW TWO OFFICERS IN IMMEDIATE FUTURE.

B. INFORM MFA THAT DEPARTMENT WILL PERMIT SOVIETS TO MAINTAIN PRESENT ON-BOARD PERSONNEL AT SF BUT REFUSE TO ISSUE VISAS FOR ANY NEW PERSONNEL OR REPLACEMENTS UNTIL CONFIDENTIAL

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STAFF IS TRIMMED TO STRICT 1 TO 1.5; UPON RESOLUTION OF TDY PROBLEM, SOVIETS MAY BRING SF BACK TO LEVEL IT REACHED BEFORE KULESHOV DEPARTED.

C. INFORM MFA THAT DEPARTMENT WILL PERMIT SOVIETS TO MAINTAIN CURRENT ON-BOARD STAFF LEVEL AND MAKE REPLACEMENTS, BUT CONTINUE TO REFUSE TO PERMIT ADDITIONS TO STAFF; UPON RESOLUTION OF TDY PROBLEM, SF MAY RETURN TO LEVEL IT WAS AT BEFORE KULESHOV DEPARTURE.

D. THREATEN TO MFA TO BE MORE RESTRICTIVE ON KIEV-NEW YORK MATTERS IF SOVIETS CONTINUE TO INTERFERE WITH LENINGRAD TDY TRAVEL. DEPARTMENT COULD INSIST THAT MUCH TDY TRAVEL

IN LENINGRAD IS RELATED TO BUILDING IMPROVEMENT AND MAINTENANCE, AND SOVIET INTERFERENCE WITH TDY TRAVEL TO LENINGRAD SHOWS NEED FOR DEPARTMENT TO ADHERE CLOSELY TO PARALLEL PROGRESS IN NEW CHANCERIES AND CONGENS. DEPARTMENT COULD ORDER SOVEMBASSY TO WITHDRAW ONE OF FAMILIES NOW IN NEW YORK TO PROTECT CONGEN BUILDING THERE.

E. TAKE NO ACTION - LIVE WITH SOVIET 21-DAY WAITING PERIOD FOR TDY VIA APPLICATIONS FOR TIME BEING AND SEE WHAT DEVELOPS, ADVISING ALL WHO PLAN TDY TRAVEL TO LENINGRAD TO APPLY WELL IN ADVANCE OF PLANNED TRAVEL. TWO PENDING LENINGRAD TDY VISAS SHOULD BE ISSUED SEPT. 23. WE COULD WAIT TO SEE IF FUTURE APPLICATIONS ARE SIMILARLY DELAYED.

F. BE ACCOMODATING - INFORM MFA DEPARTMENT IS WILLING TO LIBERALIZE TARGET RATIO TO LEVEL SUCH AS 1 TO 1.75 IN RETURN FOR RESUMPTION OF UNHINDERED TDY TRAVEL TO LENINGRAD.

G. WHILE HOLDING IN PRINCIPLE TO 1 TO 1.5 TARGET RATIO, WE COULD INFORM SOVIETS THAT WE ARE WILLING TO CONTINUE TO PERMIT SOVIETS TO EXCEED TARGET RATIO ON TEMPORARY BASIS IN ANTICIPATION OF OUR ASSIGNING ADDITIONAL PERSONNEL TO LENINGRAD. (ADDITIONAL USIA OFFICER IS SCHEDULED FOR ASSIGNMENT TO LENINGRAD NEXT SUMMER.) EMBASSY COULD RESPOND TO KORNIYENKO DEMARCHE REPORTED REF A BY NOTING THAT I) DEPARTMENT CONSIDERS IT IN BEST INTEREST OF US-USSR RELATIONS TO KEEP OFFICIAL SOVIET CONFIDENTIAL

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PRESENCE IN SF AT REASONABLE LEVEL; II) 1 TO 1.5 REMAINS US TARGET RATIO; III) TO ALLEVIATE IRRITANT IN OUR BILATERAL RELATIONS DEPARTMENT IS WILLING TO PERMIT SOVIETS TO EXCEED PRESENT ON-BOARD SF STAFF AT THIS TIME BY TWO ADDITIONAL PERMANENT POSITIONS (I.E., TARGET RATIO LEVEL PLUS FOUR), PROVIDED SOVIETS WILL NOT ASK TO GO BEYOND THAT LEVEL UNTIL LENINGRAD STAFF LEVEL INCREASES TO OUR TARGET RATIO LEVEL, AND PROVIDED SOVIETS IMMEDIATELY STOP DELAYING AND INTERFERING WITH TDY TRAVEL TO LENINGRAD. (THIS WOULD PERMIT THEM TO REPLACE KULESHOV AND ADD ONE ADDITIONAL PERSON AT THIS TIME.)

5. A SEPARATE ISSUE WHICH COULD BE COMBINED WITH ANY OF ABOVE IS EXTENSION OF 3-5 DAY RULE TO SAN FRANCISCO/ LENINGRAD CONGENS. MFA EXPRESSED INTEREST IN DOING SO IN 1973, BUT DEPARTMENT DID NOT WISH TO DO SO AT THAT TIME WHILE MONITORING SF STAFFING LEVEL. IF TDYS SPECIFICALLY INCLUDED, DEPARTMENT WOULD NOT OBJECT TO EXTENDING 3-5 DAY RULE TO SF AND LENINGRAD NOW. HOWEVER, UNDER 3-5 DAY RULE BOTH SIDES SHOULD EITHER ISSUE OR REFUSE AT END OF FIVE-DAY PERIOD, AND WOULD BE PRECLUDED FROM PRESENT GAMESMANSHIP TACTIC OF NEITHER ISSUING NOR REFUSING AND

SIMPLY WITHHOLDING VISA. THUS, EXTENDING 3-5 DAY RULE TO CONGENS AT THIS TIME DURING SF STAFFING IMPASSE MIGHT FORCE FORMAL REFUSALS WHICH WOULD ONLY EXACERBATE SITUATION.

6. DEPARTMENT TENTATIVELY PREFERS OPTIONS C OR G. WHILE WE WISH TO DECIDE UPON LINE OF AN APPROACH TO MFA AT THIS TIME, EXACT NUMBERS IN VARIOUS OPTIONS WOULD BE SUBJECT TO SLIGHT VARIATION IN LIGHT OF RECONFIRMATION OF PRESENT STAFFING FIGURES PER PARA 4 ABOVE.

7. POSTS COMMENTS OR SUGGESTIONS ARE REQUESTED. KISSINGER

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